

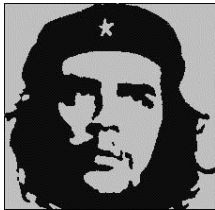
SABIA VD. QUE?

REAL FACTS ABOUT SURREAL MISPERCEPTIONS

Why do you think that only one of the three heroes of the Cuban revolution is left standing to write the history books?



Think that Fidel Castro is a kindly grandfather figure?



Think that Che Guevara is a kitsch image on a t-shirt or a handsome revolutionary on a motorbike?

Think it's hard to vote in Florida?
If your ballot looked like this, would you want to vote?

CHOOSE ONE FOR PRESIDENT:

Fidel Castro _____
Fidel Castro _____
Fidel Castro _____

CHOOSE ONE FOR PARTY SECRETARY :

Fidel Castro _____
Fidel Castro _____
Fidel Castro _____

CHOOSE ONE FOR PRIME MINISTER
AND HEAD OF CABINET:

Fidel Castro _____
Fidel Castro _____
Fidel Castro _____

Sabia Usted Que....

75 Facts the Castro Regimes Hides from Cubans and Visitors

To prevent Cubans from having their own independent access to information, the Cuban regime manipulates the media, walls off the Internet, dictates what books are sold and movies shown, and carefully regulates what is taught at schools and what can be discussed in public forums. The regime blocks whatever information does not jibe with its propaganda. Below are 75 facts that the Castro regime does not want Cubans to know or discuss with foreign visitors.

Broken Promises

*In Castro's famous 1953 "History Will Absolve Me" speech, first given at his trial for leading an unsuccessful armed assault and which became the manifesto that subsequently won him the support of the Cuban people, Castro vowed to be guided once in power by the **1940 Constitution**, with its **democratic elections**, **separation of powers** and **respect for civil liberties**.*

-- After overthrowing the dictator Fulgencio Batista in 1959, Castro instead imposed one-man rule over Cuba to remake society according to his preferences. Dominating Cuba for 46 years, Castro is the world's longest enduring dictator alive today.

-- Between 5,000 and 15,000 Cubans have died at the hands of the regime, most in the early years of the revolution, according to various estimates. One detailed study published in 2004 by Armando Lago, a consultant with the Stanford Research Institute, reports that 5,621 individuals were shot by firing squads, 1,163 were killed extra-judicially, 1,081 political prisoners died in jail, and 1,258 anti-Castro guerrillas were killed in combat -- a total of 9,123 Cubans killed. (In comparison, the Batista dictatorship is thought to have killed three thousand Cubans, while the Pinochet dictatorship is believed to have murdered approximately three thousand Chileans.)

-- Che Guevara personally presided over the execution of hundreds of Cubans between 1959-63 in Havana's La Cabana fortress, now a popular tourist

destination. According to some imprisoned at La Cabana (including poet and human rights activists Armando Valladares), Che Guevara took particular interest in the interrogation, torture and execution of the some prisoners.

-- In 1965, Castro himself admitted the existence of 20,000 political prisoners. Currently, approximately three hundred political activists are in Cuban prisons for peacefully exercising rights to free speech and assembly; eighty are designated “prisoners of conscience” by Amnesty International.

-- Rather than accept Castro’s political and economic controls, over 1.5 million, and perhaps as many as two million, Cubans have abandoned their homeland. The outflow continues at a high rate. During the past decade, over 250,00 Cubans have gone to the U.S., with 30,000 Cubans arriving legally and illegally in 2004.

*In “History Will Absolve Me,” Castro promised to provide year-round employment through **industrialization** and **land reform** -- he said nothing about abolishing private property.*

-- The Cuban regime claims that unemployment is at only 1.9 percent. Claims of full employment cannot mask paltry salaries, widespread idleness and underemployment; many state employees, 90 percent of the work force, steal from their job sites or depend on a second black-market job to put food on the table.

-- Castro’s misguided efforts at Soviet-style industrialization have been hugely expensive fiascos that failed to reduce Cuba’s reliance on primary product exports. In 1983 Castro launched with Soviet backing the creation of a Cuban nuclear program. Despite having sunk billions of U.S. dollars into building two nuclear reactors, inappropriate design, structural defects, shoddy materials and poor training compelled Castro to abandon the project in 2000.

-- Once in power, Castro abolished private property and collectivized farmlands. Today the island can no longer grow enough food for its people, despite an ideal climate and fertile soil. High market prices make dairy products prohibitively expensive for most Cubans; subsidized milk is rationed to children under seven years old, but this subsidy ends when they turn eight.

-- In the early days of the revolution, Castro castigated tourism as humiliating. Tourism, including widespread sexual tourism, is now Cuba’s largest source of hard currency. Tourist sector jobs are highly sought after; a Havana waiter receiving tips from foreigners earns far more than most Cuban professionals.

*In “History Will Absolve Me,” Castro promised “a decent home for every Cuban” and better **health** and **educational** opportunities.*

-- All visitors to Havana notice that the city -- once the architectural jewel of the Caribbean -- is woefully rundown. Old Havana’s existing housing stock is so badly deteriorated that three to four buildings collapse every month. Cubans across the island suffer from a chronic housing shortage; the estimated deficit is 1.6 million housing units. As a result, newlyweds customarily live with in-laws for many years and even divorced couples often have no other recourse but to continue sharing quarters.

-- If massive Soviet subsidies once underwrote impressive health care and education programs, chronically underpaid teachers are now quitting in droves and doctors take menial jobs to supplement their incomes. The enormous numbers of doctors churned out by the medical schools are literally rented out by the regime to developing nations for hard currency and political advantage. Hospitals, except those reserved for regime elites, have deteriorated badly. Average Cubans often experience difficulty in obtaining basic medicine, like aspirin.

Pre-revolutionary Cuba.... Neither Hell nor Heaven

Batista’s dictatorship profoundly discredited Cuba’s political system and there existed significant socio-economic disparities, particularly between Havana Province and the island’s eastern provinces. These conditions fueled strong pre-1959 support for Castro, especially given his reformist, democratic pledges. Nevertheless, pre-revolutionary Cuba also boasted considerable accomplishments that put it ahead of many other Latin American nations at the time. Comparisons between specific pre-revolutionary and post-1959 socio-economic indicators reveal gains in some areas, but significant losses in others. The larger question, however, is whether the gains brought about by the revolution have been worth the enormous human suffering experienced by the Cuban people and their loss of human rights, political liberties and economic opportunities.

-- Cuba’s 1940 constitution was one of the more progressive in Latin America. It extended social security, provided equal pay for equal work, protected individual and social rights, and outlawed the plantation system of land ownership. With Batista out of power, Cuba’s constitution could have laid the foundation for the development of a healthy democracy.

-- Presidential elections widely regarded as free and fair took place in 1940, 1944 and 1948; unfortunately for Cuba's democracy, Batista's military coup aborted the 1952 elections. Despite Castro's pledge soon after achieving power to hold national elections, he has never allowed a genuinely free, democratic electoral contest.

-- Prior to 1959, public debate was vigorous: there were 58 newspapers and 28 television stations providing a variety of political views. Today, the government operates Cuba's two national papers, more than a dozen provincial papers, the four TV channels and all the radio stations; all rigidly adhere to the regime's scripted viewpoints.

-- According to the UN, Cuba's literacy rate in the 1950s was the fourth highest in Latin America; in the mid-1990s its literacy rate was second in the region to Argentina's. Cuba's improvement in its literacy rate from 76 to 96 percent was impressive, but not unique, among Latin American nations. Panama matched Cuba's improvement when measured in percentage terms.

-- Prior to the revolution, Cuba was among the most prosperous countries in Latin America, while today it is among the poorest in the region. According to UN figures, Cuba's per capita GDP in 1958 was ranked fifth from the top in Latin America, behind only Venezuela, Argentina, Uruguay and Chile. According to the 2005 World Factbook, Cuba's per capita GDP in 2003 was estimated at 2,900 U.S. dollars, placing Cuba among the lowest in GDP per capita in Latin America, ahead of only Honduras, Bolivia, Nicaragua and Haiti.

-- The 1960 UN Statistical Yearbook rated pre-revolutionary Cuba as third among eleven Latin American countries in per capita daily caloric consumption. In 1995, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) judged that Cuba, in terms of per capita daily caloric consumption, was the worst off of the eleven countries, with a poorer food supply situation than Honduras. Although Cuba's food supply situation subsequently improved, the FAO calculated that in 1999-2001 eleven percent of Cuba's population was undernourished.

-- In 1957 Cuba's infant mortality rate was the lowest in Latin America, on a par with the United States and Canada, and superior to France and Belgium. Today, Canada has the lowest infant mortality rate in the hemisphere, but second placed

Cuba has a lower rate than the United States and the rest of Latin America. A major factor behind Cuba's low infant mortality rate is its exceptionally high abortion rate, which is often employed to terminate "high-risk" pregnancies.

-- Cuba's rate of 128 physicians and dentists per 100,000 people in 1957 placed the nation at the same health care level as Holland and ahead of the United Kingdom and the United States. Today, Cuba has a huge excess supply of physicians, with reportedly 68,000 doctors. Ironically, average Cubans often have difficulty in securing quality and specialized medical attention given the regime's policy of stationing enormous numbers of doctors abroad.

-- In the 1950s, Cubans had more cars per capita than the Japanese, Greeks or Spaniards. Today, very few Cubans can afford to buy even a used car. Moreover, the regime's restrictions governing the purchase and sale of post-1959 vehicles make ownership impossible for the vast majority of the population. These days Cubans must rely primarily on inadequate public transportation or hitchhiking.

A One Man Show

Fidel Castro is the world's longest serving dictator in modern history. He has eliminated every potential rival. All power is centralized in his hands. He has converted virtually every significant Cuban institution, with the exception of the Catholic Church, into a vehicle for the regime to control and mobilize the population. Educational, employment, and housing privileges can be taken away from those Cubans who openly question the benefits of the revolution or who refuse to participate in regime organized meetings at the workplace or in the neighborhood, mass rallies and "voluntary" work campaigns.

-- Camilo Cienfuegos is revered by many as a genuine hero of the revolution. Two of the original "comandantes" who helped Castro defeat Batista in 1959 later wrote books in which they charge that Castro arranged for the death of Camilo, seeing in him a potential rival with huge charismatic appeal. (See Huber Matos, Como Llego la Noche, and El Clarin Toca Al Amanecer by Jaime Costa.) Many have questioned why Castro so readily allowed Che Guevara to launch his quixotic insurrectional campaigns in Africa and Bolivia, and did not do more to help Che and his rag-tag guerrillas in Bolivia when they were clearly on the run.

-- In 2003, at the age of 77, Castro proclaimed his intention to remain in power for the rest of his life. Fidel has formally designated his younger brother by four years, Raul, as his successor. The regime does not allow public discussions of Cuba's future after the Castro brothers.

-- Cuban elections offer no choice. The only legal political party in Cuba is the Communist Party. Candidates for all national and provincial-level elected

positions are selected by “mass” communist organizations. In the 2003 National Assembly elections there were 609 candidates for 609 seats. The National Assembly meets twice per year, each time for about a week, to consider proposals put forth by the Council of State; it has never voted “No” to any of the Council’s proposals.

-- In May 2002, Oswaldo Paya and fellow Varela Project organizers submitted to the National Assembly sufficient signatures under the Cuban Constitution for the Assembly to consider a series of proposed constitutional reforms to guarantee fundamental human rights.

-- To counteract the appeal of the Varela Project, the Cuban regime announced that its own tightly supervised referendum initiative had rendered socialist rule in Cuba “irrevocable.” Almost half of the 75 human rights activists and independent journalists arrested in a massive government crackdown in March 2003 were promoters of the Varela Project.

“Your Human Rights Belong to Me”

Cuban officials who question Castro’s dictates risk dismissal, humiliation or worse; the list of disgraced Ministers who have fallen out of Castro’s favor is lengthy. Ordinary Cubans who dare voice differences with the regime risk imprisonment, torture or exile. Cuba has led the world in the number of political prisoners it has incarcerated in relation to its population. Castro’s disregard for human suffering was illustrated during the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis: he urged Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in a letter to launch a nuclear attack on the U.S. -- which would have precipitated a world-wide holocaust killing hundreds of millions of people -- if the U.S. were to invade Cuba. Khrushchev ignored Castro, agreeing to a U.S. solution to the crisis.

-- When Castro overthrew Batista in 1959, Cuba had 14 jails holding four thousand prisoners. Cuba’s population has doubled since then, but the incarceration rate is 13 times higher. Today, Castro's 200 prisons confine 100,000 prisoners.

-- In Castro’s Cuba, individual rights are subordinate to the State’s “socialist values and goals.” The judiciary is explicitly subservient to the Executive Branch. Judges, prosecutors, and defense attorneys are all under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice.

-- Cubans are routinely convicted of “dangerousness;” in other words, for representing a potential danger to Castro’s regime, not for having committed any crime. The Cuban Penal Code defines “dangerousness” as a “special proclivity of a person to commit crimes, demonstrated by his conduct in manifest contradiction of socialist norms.”

-- Cuba has the world's highest per capita percentage of political prisoners.

There are more than four hundred documented cases of imprisonment in Cuba for political dissent, human rights advocacy, civil society participation, and conscientious objection to the Castro regime.

-- During his own incarceration in the 1950s, Castro wrote letters bragging about his own comfortable conditions as Batista's prisoner: clean clothes; twice-daily baths; a spotless cell ("cleaner than rooms at the Hotel Nacional"); daily sun and fresh air; unrestricted reading material; and excellent food ("spaghetti with squid and Italian chocolates"), coffee, and even after-dinner cigars.

-- In contrast, Castro subjects his own political prisoners to appalling deprivations. His political prisoners are confined to tiny, unlighted and vermin-infested cells, their food is often rotten, they receive inadequate medical care, and the authorities arbitrarily restrict reading material, visitors, and food brought by family members.

-- Cuba has not allowed the International Committee of the Red Cross, Amnesty International, or any other international human rights group to visit its prisons since 1989. Despite UN resolutions urging Cuba to do so, the regime refuses to allow the Personal Representative for Cuba of the U. N. High Commissioner for Human Rights to enter Cuba.

-- To prevent independent monitoring of human rights practices by Cuban activists, the Cuban regime uses threats and harassment, arbitrary arrests, in-country travel restrictions, politically motivated job dismissals -- as well as long-term incarceration and involuntary exile.

-- According to the non-official Cuban Commission for Human Rights and National Reconciliation, the Cuban penal code lists 60 offenses for which Cubans can receive the death penalty. In 2003, three Cubans were executed for hijacking a ferry in an attempt to flee Cuba, a crime in which no passengers were harmed. In just seven days the regime raced through an arrest, conviction, dismissal of an appeal, and the execution of the three men.

-- Of the Cuban cases approved to receive U.S. refugee status in the last quarter of fiscal year 2004, 33 percent were former political prisoners, 18 percent were adult children of those persecuted, 13 percent were human rights activists, 11 percent had faced religious persecution and two percent were displaced professionals.

“You Don’t Need To Know That”

The Castro regime tightly controls all information and replaces independent media reporting with official propaganda. Most Cubans tune out the regime’s rhetoric. One indicator: despite hearing the Castro regime obsessively criticize the United States for innumerable political and socio-economic ills, the U.S. is the preferred destination of the overwhelming number of Cuban emigrants, legal and illegal.

-- The Castro regime does not allow Cubans access to all sources of information, a free press and open public debates. In a global index on media freedom released October 2004 by Paris-based watchdog Reporters Without Borders, Cuba was bottom-ranked at 166 out of 167 countries. Only North Korea has a worse record.

-- Independent Cuban journalists who dare present an unfiltered view of Cuba’s reality are routinely harassed, and many have been imprisoned, for sending stories off-island for publication. In 2003, the regime jailed 25 independent journalists.

-- Under the 1999 Protection of National Independence and the Economy law, Cubans possessing or disseminating "subversive" literature face possible prison terms of up to 20 years.

-- Books that the regime considers "subversive," including works by Martin Luther King, are not sold in Cuba and are confiscated. Specific approval from the authorities is required to access “subversive” books in government libraries. Yet Castro claims that there are no banned books in Cuba.

-- According to Reporters Without Borders, Cuba is among the world’s most stringent regulators of the Internet, utilizing censorship, wire-tapping and restrictive legislation to limit access. Government authorization is required to buy a modem. Cyber-cafes with access to the world-wide-web are limited to foreigners. Cubans who enter them illegally must pay hourly rates that are worth nearly half an average month's salary.

-- It is illegal for private citizens to possess TV satellite dishes. Official authorization is required to own fax machines, computers, and cellular phones. Telephone service is also distributed according to the extent of a citizen’s “revolutionary” contributions.

-- The Catholic Church, Cuba’s largest religious order, cannot freely import Bibles, is not allowed to have its own printing presses, and is the only Catholic Church in the world denied access to the Internet. Only religious organizations that join the government’s watchdog “Cuban Council of Churches” are granted these privileges.

-- The Cuban Government also has an "Office of Religious Affairs," housed in the Ministry of the Interior with other state security organizations, to control all aspects of religious activities, including when and where a religious group holds meetings and the kind of interactions permitted with foreign religious entities.

-- The Castro regime objects to Radio Marti broadcasts as "subversive" and tries to jam them, despite such broadcasts being allowed under Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The regime ignores the fact that Cuba transmitted radio broadcasts promoting armed insurrection to other Caribbean countries, notably to Haiti in 1959 and Grenada in 1981.

-- The Cuban media never mentions that the regime has trained and supported terrorist groups worldwide, that it continues to harbor terrorists from Colombian guerrilla groups and the violent Basque separatist movement ETA, and that it still provides protection to major Colombian narcotics traffickers and U.S. fugitives, including individuals wanted for murder.

-- International journalists residing in Cuba, whose reporting does not appear on the island, must receive permission to interview government officials, are called into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs when specific media pieces irritate regime leaders, and do not have their visas renewed if their reporting is considered habitually critical. The regime generally does not extend visas to reporters from the Washington Post and Miami Herald.

An Economy in Ruins

The Soviet Union gave Cuba between 65 and 100 billion U.S. dollars, or the equivalent of five to seven Marshall Plans, even without adjusting for inflation. Just one U.S. funded Marshall Plan was needed to re-build Western Europe after World War II. There are few remnants of the massive Soviet aid in today's Cuba, leaving many to wonder where this assistance went. When the Soviets began phasing out their subsidies in 1989, the Cuban economy went into a tailspin from which it has never fully recovered. The Cuban regime tries to blame the disastrous state of the island's economy on the United States, to draw attention away from its failed economic policies.

-- If pre-revolutionary Cuba was once ranked among the most prosperous of the Latin American countries in terms of GDP per capita, today it ranks among the most impoverished in the region in terms of GDP per capita. The average monthly income of a Cuban employee is 260 pesos (about ten dollars). Pensioners receive about 100 pesos (about four dollars).

-- For over forty years, Cubans have survived on ration books that subsidize a limited number of basic products, such as soy protein, rice and beans. Today,

these rations get Cubans through approximately ten days of the month; for the remainder, they must purchase food at expensive market prices or in the black market.

-- Castro once swore to diversify the export economy, but after various hare-brained schemes -- including the breeding of miniature cows -- sugar remains the primary agricultural commodity. The sugar industry's productivity has plummeted, and the crop is being harvested at the lowest levels in 70 years.

-- Prior to the revolution, beef had been a staple of the Cuban diet. Today, the vast majority of Cubans cannot afford beef, which is now a delicacy available only at facilities catering to tourists.

-- Reflecting the Castro regime's approach to controlling scarcities, Cubans can be imprisoned for two to five years for killing a cow without permission from the state (Article 240, Chapter VXI of the Penal Code of Cuba).

-- In order to curb energy consumption and overloading the country's fragile electrical system, Cubans may neither purchase nor import microwave ovens nor air conditioners.

-- To cope with the end of Soviet subsidies, the regime permitted self-employment in a limited number of professions. Cubans rushed to take advantage of this opening, and by 1995 there were 200,000 self-employed workers. That number has been cut by half, as Castro subsequently recentralized the economy. New authorizations are no longer being issued in a number of categories, including home-based restaurants (paladares), clowns, magicians, potters, and used booksellers.

-- Castro has justified the privations caused by the revolution as necessary to impose "equality" upon the Cuban people. Yet Cuban society has become increasingly unequal. One expert on the Cuban economy estimates that in 1989 the ratio between the Cuban earning the least and the one earning the most was one to 4.5. In 2002 that same ratio had increased to one to 12,500.

-- The prosperity achieved by Cubans in the United States and elsewhere helps hundreds of thousand of their relatives on the island survive the privations of living in a "socialist paradise."

Remittances from Cuban émigrés to family members are the island's third largest source of hard currency. Estimates vary, but remittances from the U.S. over the last decade could be as much as

five billion U.S. dollars and possibly much more. Since 1992, the U.S. Government has licensed over 800 million dollars in donations of medicine and medical equipment. The regime siphons off a large part of remittances through its dollar stores, which offer Cubans otherwise scarce imported items at extremely high price markups.

“Socialist Paradise” ... just not for the average Cuban

Well over 90 percent of the Cuban labor force works for the government. The regime decides where people work, their salary and whether they receive promotions. A comparison of two categories of government workers is revealing: Cuban doctors earn approximately 20 U.S. dollars monthly while policemen earn 40 dollars. The regime likes to tout its achievements in promoting racial equality. Nevertheless, senior government and Communist Party positions have always been predominately filled by Cubans of European background, who also now disproportionately fill the best paid jobs in the premier tourist facilities.

-- Workers suspected of ideological “unreliability” are subject to arbitrary firing and on-going discrimination.

-- Workers are forced to engage in marches and rallies to demonstrate loyalty to the regime. Special workers brigades, armed with clubs, have been unleashed against peaceful Cuban protestors.

-- The “Cuban Workers' Association,” a Communist Party entity, is the sole legally recognized "union" in Cuba. The International Labor Organization has called on Cuba to recognize independent labor unions; the Cuban regime, jailing their top leadership, claims there are none.

-- The best paid Cubans work for foreign firms and embassies. Nevertheless, these foreign entities must pay the regime in hard currency while the workers receive from the government the equivalent of five percent of their earnings. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights has ruled that the Castro regime’s appropriation of 95 percent of the wages paid by foreign enterprises violates a worker's right to receive the benefit of his/her labor.

-- Blacks and mulattoes constitute two thirds of the population, but are significantly under represented in top leadership positions. The number of Afro-Cubans serving in the Council of State is just 6 out of 34, and they fill only one third of the National Assembly seats.

Tourists Before Cubans

When the Soviet subsidies dried up, Castro opted to reopen Cuba to tourism to generate hard currency. Today, tourism, largely from Western Europe and Canada, is the island's primary source of income. For the past decade the Cuban Government has implemented a policy of "tourism apartheid," reserving the island's premier tourist attractions for the exclusive use of foreigners.

-- The Cuban Ministry of Tourism issued in 2005 a directive ordering all Cubans working in tourism to limit their relations with foreigners to the "strictly necessary." Among other things, the directive requires Cuban tourist workers to obtain permission before attending any meals or parties hosted by foreigners, to declare in writing whenever they receive a gift "in kind" from a foreigner, to be discreet about the information they share with foreigners, and to report to their supervisors any time a foreigner tries to undermine their revolutionary principles.

-- In Havana's restored colonial section, the police frequently drive away ordinary Cubans, especially low-income blacks, from enjoying facilities serving tourists. Cubans are not permitted to share the island's most beautiful beaches with tourists; they are also not permitted to stay in the island's tourist hotels, even if they can pay in hard currency. Widespread exceptions are made for prostitutes.

-- Castro began the revolution pledging to free Cuban women from prostitution. Since the 1990's Cuba has become a major world magnet for sexual tourism, including sex with minors. The Cuban regime tolerates widespread prostitution, despite its assertion to the contrary.

"You Can Go; You Must Stay"

Attracted by Cuba's economic opportunities, the island received large numbers of European immigrants in the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th. After Castro's revolution, Cuba has exported its own people in huge numbers -- over 1.5 million Cubans, and perhaps as many as two million. In other words, between 13 and 18 percent of Cuba's population has emigrated; in U.S. terms, that would be the equivalent of between 37.5 and 50 million Americans exiling themselves. Cubans who decide to emigrate legally pay a high price for their decision: while they remain in Cuba processing their paperwork, which can take several years, they are considered by the regime as politically "unreliable" and are often denied educational and employment opportunities. Moreover, Cubans who emigrate must turn over all of their personal property to the government.

-- Reflecting the frustrations of living in Castro's Cuba, the pent-up demand to emigrate remains enormous. In one 30-day period in 1998, 541,000 Cubans entered a U.S. Government "visa lottery." Along with eligible family members, they represent two million intending émigrés, or 20 percent of the population.

-- The U.S. Government has repeatedly asked the Cuban regime to hold another lottery registration to refresh the 1998 immigrant applicant pool. The Cuban Government refuses to allow another lottery, wanting to avoid the embarrassment that millions more of its citizens, especially the young, would sign up to leave.

-- The Cuban regime determines which of its citizens it will allow to visit other countries, denying or approving exit permission as punishment or reward. Two thousand Cubans who have been granted U.S. immigrant visas are denied permission to leave by their own government.

-- The regime also exploits its exit permit granting authority to extract high payments from its citizens. A Cuban wanting to emigrate to the U.S. must pay nearly UUUUUUUUone thousand U.S. dollars per person, a small fortune for the average citizen, to obtain the necessary Cuban government paperwork.

-- Emigrating Cubans must turn over all of their property, including appliances, art, books, cash, jewelry and savings accounts, to the state before departing the country. To get an exit visa, Cubans must buy back any car they have owned and recently sold, and also give it to the government.

-- Every year, thousands of Cubans who despair of finding legal ways to leave the island flee by sea, including on homemade rafts. The number of Cubans who lost their lives, particularly by drowning, while trying to flee the island during the past 46 years will never be known; however, the total could easily run in the thousands.

Getting Others To Pay For His Mess

Castro is one of the world's most gifted salesmen. Prior to his triumph in 1959, Castro successfully portrayed himself as the champion of the Cuban people's repressed democratic and reformist aspirations. Subsequently, he mesmerized many throughout the world into excusing his dictatorial rule while he created a regime that represents a historical cul-de-sac. In addition, Castro has also seduced foreign treasury ministers and bankers, fleecing them in the process. The Castro regime shows little gratitude toward Cuba's most generous former benefactor and its largest single creditor, Russia. Today, Cuba is looking at Venezuela as its primary source of subsidized assistance, in the form of oil shipments, much of it unpaid.

-- Cuba owes over 13 billion U.S. dollars in external debt; among others, it owes Japanese creditors 2.3 billion dollars, Argentine creditors 1.9 billion dollars and Spanish creditors 1.7 billion dollars. Cuba still owes Russia 20 billion in ruble debt. Including both the hard currency and ruble debt, Cuba's foreign debt per person is approximately 3,000 dollars; in 1958 Cuba's per person foreign debt was seven dollars.

-- Cuba has failed to pay off the majority of its long-term loans. The regime defaulted on its Paris Club debt in 1986, and has for nearly 20 years refused to provide that organization with basic data about the Cuban economy required to reschedule the debt.

-- In 2002 Moody's Investors Service downgraded Cuba from Caa, which is "very poor financial security," to Caa1, which is "speculative grade, very poor." Dun & Bradstreet gives Cuba a DB6d rating, placing the island along with Belarus and Burma among the world's economic basket cases. (There is no rating from Standard & Poor because the Cuban Central Bank has not responded to their inquiry.)

The Five Spies

The "Five Cuban Heroes" proclaimed by the Cuban regime were actually part of a network of 12 spies that infiltrated the U.S. In addition to the five spies who maintained their innocence but were convicted in a jury trial (with no Cuban-American jurors), five pleaded guilty to charges of spying in exchange for reduced sentences, one was deported, and one fled to Cuba to escape arrest. The trials cost U.S. taxpayers one million dollars to provide the defendants with a free legal representation. An appeals court is reviewing the five spies' conviction.

-- The Cuban regime initially denied the five men were Cuban agents; it took almost three years, after the spies' conviction, for the regime to acknowledge that the five spies were in fact acting under its orders -- and that they were "heroes."

-- The regime is silent on the fact that the ringleader of the spies, intelligence agent Gerardo Hernandez, was found guilty of being closely involved in the Cuban air force's shoot-down of two civilian planes, over international waters, that resulted in the deaths of four persons.

-- The object of the five's spying was not solely the anti-Castro community in Miami, as the Cuban regime maintains. Among the U.S. military installations of particular interest to the five spies was the Central Command located in Tampa, which focuses on the Middle East and has no operational responsibilities for Latin

"CUBA ES UNA ENORME PRISION Y TENEMOS QUE DAR LA ALARMA ALREDEDOR DE SUS MUROS. " – Vaclav Havel



“El mundo tiene dos campos: los que aborrecen la libertad, porque sólo la quieren para sí, están en uno; los que aman la libertad, y la quieren para todos, están en otro.”

- José Martí

